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**RECREATIONAL ANGLERS  
WORKING TO CONSERVE, PROMOTE, AND ENHANCE MARYLAND'S  
MARINE RESOURCES**

February 13<sup>th</sup> 2019

To: Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chairman  
Honorable Dana Stein, Vice Chairman  
Honorable Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: House Bill: 348 – Oyster Planting Substrate Material.

**CCA Maryland Position: OPPOSE**

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This bill requires that all oyster plantings in Maryland waters use only native oyster shell unless exempted from the requirement by an extensive, time consuming and expensive approval process. This action ignores the scientific data captured from efforts in growing oysters for harvest and restoration that show that using granite, stone, environmentally clean crushed concrete, limestone marl, and reef balls are all effective alternatives to shell, are less expensive, and are widely available.

The quantity of native oyster shell markedly limited, and beyond shell recycling efforts, there are no controls in place in the wild fishery in Maryland to limit the net loss of shell that occurs through the harvest, and sale of oysters both in state and out of state.

Shucking houses in Maryland and Virginia do shell back to the state, but are also keeping this finite resource for use on private leases, further limiting the supply of shell in the market place, and increasing the cost of shell.

Noting the many negative impacts that the ongoing loss of oyster reef habitat has caused for the Chesapeake Bay as a whole, volunteers from CCA Maryland's Central Region Chapter(Westminster) came together in early 2015 to champion the creation of a reef ball building program called the Living Reef Action Campaign.

Since the program's creation, our staff and volunteers have worked to build over one-thousand concrete reef balls with over three-thousand students and volunteers in Carroll, Howard, Harford, Baltimore, Anne Arundel, and Prince Georges Counties. In 2019, our reef ball building efforts are expanding into Calvert, St. Mary's counties, all with private investment and support.

Prior to deploying the reef balls we have built, CCA Maryland works with partners to set the concrete reef units with oyster spat, to ensure that the reefs we are building are truly a

living reef from the start. Each reef ball deployed has held between 900-1500 oyster spat.

At this time, all of our reef ball work in Maryland has been done at Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative permitted sites. This bill would limit reef ball work to these sites, and ignores the value of a reef ball as a tool in restoring much needed reef habitat.

CCA Maryland continues to support science-based oyster restoration, smart aquaculture growth, and a well-managed and sustainable wild oyster fishery, and feels strongly that any effort to create a more complicated process for the use of alternative materials to benefit the growth of oyster habitat will limit progress in improving the overall health and value of the Chesapeake Bay.

**For these reasons, we respectfully request a UNFAVORABLE vote on HB 348**



**Carroll County Elementary School Students**



**Clean Reef Ball vs. 7mo. Growth of spat.**



**7<sup>th</sup> Grade Harford County Students**



**Tilghman island reef balls 2 yrs old.**